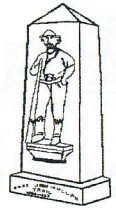


MULLAN CHRONICLES

Volume Six

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Number Two



Sohon, illustrator of Mullan's work

Julian Sobon and his wife, Nancy, provided us with a copy of a Smithsonian Institution publication last summer from which we have drawn information about John Mullan's right-hand man, Gustavus Sobon, who guided, illustrated and interpreted during the building of the Mullan Road in 1859-60. It is from that publication, Gustavus Sobon's Portraits of Flathead and Pend D'Oreille Indians, 1854, written and compiled by John C. Ewers, at the time an associate curator of ethnology, that we have drawn this final chapter, and the two previous, about Sobon's life.



Flathead Indians playing Ring, a popular men's gambling game. Sketched by Gustavus Sobon in 1854.

—From the Smithsonian Institution Miscellaneous Collections

After Mullan disbanded his road-building expedition, he and Sohon traveled to Washington, D.C. where they compiled the data, maps and illustrations for the official report, *Report on the Construction of a Military Road From Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton* that was published in 1863. The 10 lithographic reproductions included in it were from Sohon's original renderings. Also three of the large folding maps found at the end of the report credit Sohon as one of the contributing civil engineers. Two of the maps name the pass between Coeur d'Alene and St. Regis Borgia Rivers as "Sohon Pass," named thus by Mullan for Sohon who drew the first topographical map of it.

When Father DeSmet crossed it in 1863,

he referred to it as Sohon Pass. But when the railroad was built over the summit, it crossed at another pass that was near equal altitude but 1½ miles northeast of Sohon Pass. It is now called Lookout Pass which is followed by Interstate 90. During the 1890's, the name St. Regis Pass appears to have replaced Sohon Pass on most maps.

On April 29, 1863, Sohon married Juliana Groh and they moved to San Francisco, Calif. where he opened a "Photographic and Ambrotype Gallery." Among those sitting for his work was Jesuit priest

Father DeSmet, the founder of St. Mary Mission to the Flathead Indians. In 1865-66 Sohon gave up the business and returned to Washington where he lived the rest of his life.

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Surviving Stretch of the Road Featured at Sixth Mullan Day

The sixth annual John Mullan Day drew 35 Mullanites from around the Northwest to Superior on May 13, 1995. Two presentations on segments of the Military Road itself were the main attractions.

Chuck Mead, a native of Mineral County, Montana, and Bill Weikel, a surveyor from Missoula, presented an hour's worth of slides and description of one of

the most unchanged stretches of the Mullan Road where it transits the Point of Rocks west of Alberton, MT. For nearly two miles you can walk the road, noting how it ascends the slope and threads its way through rocky defiles, admiring the rock work—which has survived intact—that

(See "Mullan Day" on page 6)

In Washington, Sohon ran a shoe business and with his wife raised a family of eight children, five of whom lived to adulthood. His three sons became well known in their separate fields. Henry W. Sohon was a president of the District of Columbia Bar Association. Dr. Frederick Sohon accompanied Robert Peary as physician on three Arctic expeditions. Dr. Michael Sohon isolated the chemical phenalthalein while at

(See "Sohon's work" on page two)

Sohon's work is authoritative resource

John Hopkins University. His daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Sohon, was a practicing physician in Washington, D.C. while his grandson, Prof. Frederick W. Sohon, S.J. was a director for the world-famous Seismological Laboratory at Georgetown University.

Unlike Mullan, Sohon never returned to the northwest or the scenes of his explorations from 1853-1862. Yet his personal correspondence and considerable num-

After leaving the Northwest, Sohon remained actively interested in the welfare of the tribes he knew so well.

ber of copies of government documents pertaining to relations with Northwest Indians among his personal papers indicate that he remained actively interested in the welfare of the tribes he knew so well. Members of the Flathead Indian delega-

tion to Washington in 1884, led by Chief Charlo, visited Sohon at home where they shared the ceremonial pipe.

Gustavus Sohon died in Washington on Sept. 3, 1903 at age 78. He was buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

Three years before his death, Hazard Stevens published a biography of his father Isaac Stevens with whom both Mullan and Sohon worked extensively. The majority of the illustrations in this two-volume work were halftone reproductions of 22 original pencil portraits and eight scenes drawn by Private Sohon during the treaty-making operations in spring, summer and fall of 1855. Hazard Stevens wrote in regard to these illustrations:

The portrait of Indian chiefs were made by Gustavus Sohon, a private soldier of the 4th infantry, an intelligent and well educated German, who had great skill in making likenesses. He also made the views of the councils and expedition. These portraits with many others taken by the same artist were intended by Governor Stevens to be used to illustrate a complete account of the treaty opera-

tions.

Among the Sohon illustrations in Stevens' book were portraits of prominent chiefs of the Walla Walla and Blackfeet Treaty Councils but do not include leaders of the Flathead or Pend d'Oreille tribal leaders who participated in the Blackfeet and Flathead treaties. We do not know why.

In 1883, a collection of northwestern

"Sohon, a private soldier of the 4th Infantry, an intelligent and well-educated German who had great skill in making likenesses."

Indian portraits was given to the U.S. National Museum by Williard Jewell. It included nine pencil portraits of prominent Flathead leaders, eight portraits of chiefs and headmen of the Upper Pend d'Oreille and three portraits of prominent Iroquois living with these tribes in the



Moise, Second Chief of the Flatheads. Sohon wrote: "Steit-tish-lutse-so, or the Crawling Mountain. Known among Americans as Moise and chief of the Flatheads."

These are among a collection of 20 northwestern Indian portraits given to the U.S. National Museum in 1883 by Williard Jewell. The portraits were drawn by Sohon while serving under Mullan a year before the Flathead treaty.

—All Sohon images from the Smithsonian Institution Miscellaneous Collections



Adolphe, A Flathead Chief Sohon wrote: "Adolphe (in baptism). A chief among the Flatheads, noted for his independence and good sense. Not much liked because he never fails to reprimand one of his tribe who may deserve it."

for NW Indians in pre-reservation days

middle of the 19th century. The portraits were drawn by Sohon while serving under Mullan a year before the Flathead treaty. Each portrait is on a separate piece of thin drawing board measuring 7½ x 10 inches. Each also bears a caption in Sohon's writing about the event portrayed.

In 1947, Dr. Elizabeth Sohon gave the U.S. National Museum 25 original drawings by her father that were rendered during his stay in the Indian country of the northwest during 1854-1860. Several appear to be original field sketches in pencil which were copied at a later date in a more finished form for some of Sohon's published illustrations.

Others represent subjects that were never published. They vary in size and appear to be done on whatever material was handy.

Ewers notes in his footnotes of the publication: "Although Gustavus Sohon's drawings comprise the most extensive and authoritative pictorial series on the Indians of the Northwest Plateau in pre-reservation days; although he possessed

remarkable talent; and although some of his 52 drawings have been published, his name does not appear in any of the standard biographies of American artists. Louise Rasmussen's *Artists of the Explorations Overland, 1840-1860* devoted three short sentences to Sohon.

"This biographical sketch has been pre-

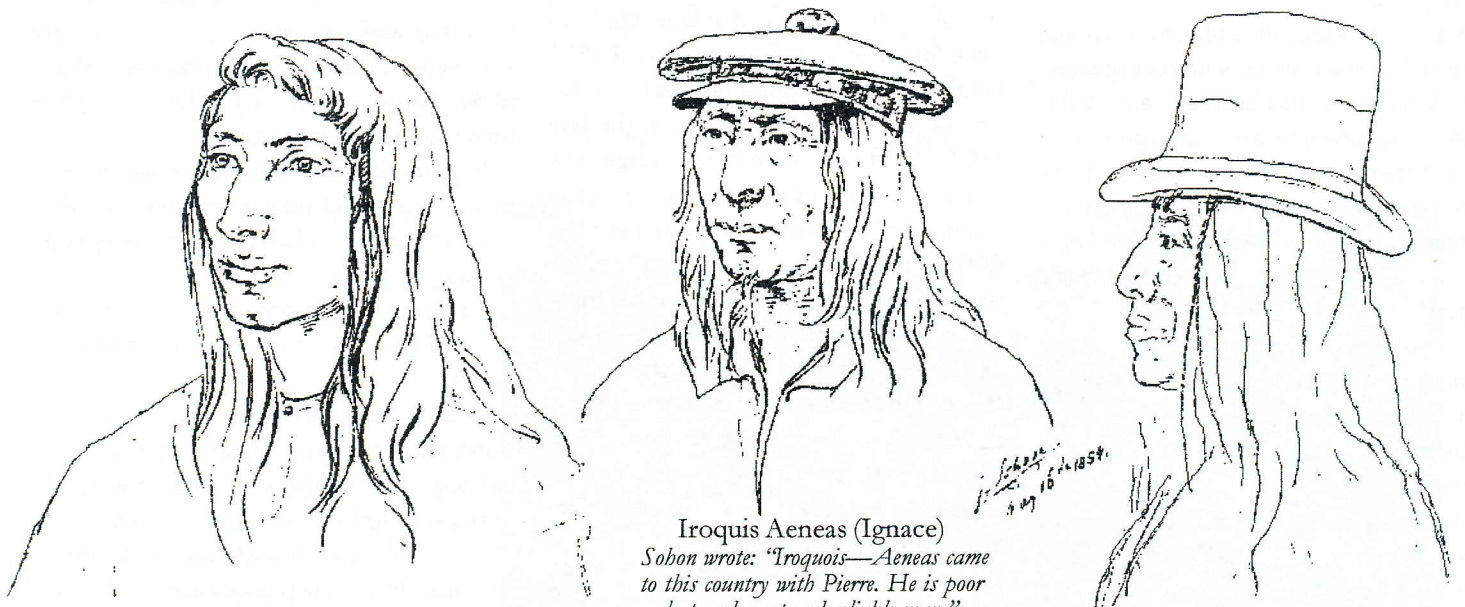
Standard biographical collections of American artists routinely understate or even overlook the significance of Sohon's work.

pared on the basis of the published government reports of the Pacific Explorations and Surveys and the Military Wagon Road, on material in Hazard Steven's life of his father, on information in the files of the War Department and State Department Archives in the National Archives, in

a typed biographical sketch written by his son, the late Henry W. Sohon in 1918, which is now in the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles, and information graciously supplied by his daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Sohon, of Washington, D.C.

"For valuable biographical information on the subject of Sohon's Indian portraits, the writer is indebted to Pierre Pichette, Martina Siwahsah and Bapitste Finley, Indians of the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana, interviewed in September, 1947."

The esteem with which the Indians of the Flathead hold the works of Sohon was demonstrated last year when they used one of his drawings on their new Cultural Center at Pablo, Montana.

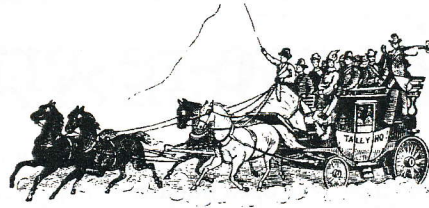


Iroquis Aeneas (Ignace)
Sohon wrote: "Iroquis—Aeneas came to this country with Pierre. He is poor but an honest and reliable man."

Charlie Lamoose, Mixed Iroquois-Pend-D'Oreille
Sohon wrote: "Lamuh (Indian Name) Charles (in baptism) Charles Lamoose—½ Iroquois and ½ Pend d'Oreille, speaks English and French and lives with the Flatheads."

"Victor - Head Chief of the Flatheads."

from the mail pouch



Two letters from our good friend Joel Overholser of Fort Benton whose new address is: 711 21st, Apt. 114.

Feb. 6, 1995

Dear Deb,

Receipt of the latest *Mullan Chronicles* was reminder I probably owed for continuation at least. It's handier to just stick in a \$10 bill than have a niece write a check, and no receipt from you necessary.

I keep my files and library in what we call the Montana Agriculture Center, by Schwinden Library sign in case anyone from your side gets to Benton. Hours about 11 mornings and 1-4 afternoons.

From our side of mountains keep remembering that after the Mullan Road of 1860, in 1862 Fisk Overland Trail Minnesota to Benton made that the best way west.

May 8, 1995

Dear Folks,

Am still interested in trails and such and have had several contacts with your speaker, Dr. Wm Furdell. As I believe I've probably mentioned, one interest is the connection here between the Mullan Road and the James L. Fisk overland expeditions from Minnesota to Fort Benton, as providing a route many followed to reach the Pacific coast.

The postoffice here recently changed and complicated my address, though they still kick Box 69 letters on to me.

Enclosed a bit of currency as a sort of payment of dues.

My files and library are in the Montana Agriculture center, entrance behind a sign (at) Schwinden Library. That's about four and a half blocks from the Sunrise Bluffs and my apartment there. I'm in here to about 10 mornings, and 1-3 afternoons. And I like visitors, it changes the days.

Best wishes.

Joel Overholser

April 30, 1995

Dear Kay,

It was sure enjoyable chatting with you the other day about the Mullan Road and other items. Enclosed is \$20 for back issues and to become a current subscriber to the *Mullan Chronicles*. I am also very curious to get exact reference for the book of maps put together in the 30's.

As I mentioned, my interest in the Road stems from the location of my mother's homestead Northwest of Helena, near Silver. I had no idea that the homestead was right on the old road until 1990. Prior to that we'd hear mom talk about the "Mullan Pass Cutoff" and just sort of nod politely as she explained that this was a way for travellers to get directly to Helena without following the Mullan road past Silver to Birdseye and thence east to Helena.

I really wasn't into it at that time, but have since found an article in the April 7, 1963 *Great Falls Tribune* which describes formation of just such a connection in the late 1860's. Obviously, even though stage runs and the like were non-existent in 1915, the assembly of homesteaders living near the O'Mara place all used the route for it's convenience. The cutoff began at the junction of Soft Bed (Clark) Creek and Willow Creek and travelled south and west of the Mullan survey, peeking over the hill to Helena at Diamond Springs, thence to Iron Station and up what is now Benton Avenue.

My research activities have remained dormant for two years, until, as I said, I went to DisneyWorld with my family in April. My two boys are 9 and 11, so they were in heaven, but I had a premonition that the excessive crowds, high prices, and inconvenience would not appeal to me.

SO: I brought along one of my Master Files of Mullan Road paraphernalia to the Magic Kingdom and moved from park bench to park bench trying to find the quietist spot with the most room where I could read. I actually got a few hour's work done and was only jarred out of 1860 by a loud Rap number lipsynced by a mechanical Mickey Mouse. This I determined was the PA-RADE.

Shortly thereafter a Park employee approached me to see if I wouldn't mind completing a questionnaire regarding my degree of enjoyment at the park. I told her I was having the time of my life, but it had nothing to do with Mickey or Donald but rather things like BirdTail Rock and Soft Bed Creek and she wouldn't really understand anyway.

I've got to run—look forward to talking to you again. I hope the conference goes well on the 13th. I'll be contacting the professor at COG.

Yours truly,
Bill Madden
351 Valley View Lane
Chester springs, PA 19425.

March 1, 1995

Dear Kay and Debbie,

We enjoyed the Sohon information in the *Mullan Chronicles*. Thank you for making it possible and sharing with us.

I brought back a flow of happy memories of the wonderful people we met, as we plodded the Mullan Road over the five year period.

I truly wish everyone interested in the Mullan Road could have shared our experience.

It was exciting for Bill Trublood and I to stand in the footsteps of history, but equally exciting was the help and encouragement of the wonderful folks along the way.

Others will agree, from Walla Walla, WA to Mullan, Idaho, the remnants of the Mullan Road Route are rather easy to follow.

With the aid of General Land Office survey maps transferred onto Metzger, and Forest Service Maps. A distance of 252

miles.

Then the hard parts begin.

Three miles east of Mullan, Idaho, up the Coeur D'Alene River, is one of the most beautiful sites on the whole route. It was once used by John Mullan as a bivouac area, now, called Shoshone Park. It's well worth a trip to see.

As you stand there looking south at the mammoth green wall of the Bitterroot Mountains stretching upwards to heaven, the only thing you know from Mullan's *Report to Congress* is that they went south and up over the top somewhere one and three-quarters miles from where you're standing. Mullan named it Sohon Pass, later known as St. Regis Pass.

I don't know why we did it. We just kept at it, trip after trip, aided by some truly uncanny circumstances, until we found and compiled the route over the Bitterroots.

The same good luck prevailed 10 miles east of Superior, Montana, in our quest for Brown's Cutoff around Big Mountain. It's all there today as it was in 1860.

Just climb one thousand feet in elevation and skirt the mountain for six miles to the other end. There are no signs, no directions. It took us four trips, and nine days to find and complete with the help of Strombo's wood pile.

We expected Mullan Pass over the Rocky Mountains up the Little Blackfoot River, to be difficult, but it was surprisingly easy. You hardly notice the climb to six-thousand feet. The pass is open and free of timber, but snowbound until the end of May most years.

When Mullan reached the Wold Creek Canyon at Medicine Rock Mountain. He knew it was impossible to go down the gorge, so he went up and around like he did at Big Mountain. He had to skirt the canyon for thirteen miles to Wolf Creek.

Along this cutoff today are a number of summer homes being built. Their only access is the Mullan Road to these remote hideaways and they don't even know it.

From Wolf Creek, MT to Sun River, past

the Birdtail Rocks, the only hazard is gumbo. Don't go is the road is wet. The same caution goes for the vicinity of Benton Lake Wildlife Refuge. An interesting stop.

Fort Benton, MT, the eastern terminus of the Mullan Road is a must to visit. Stopping there in 1986 sparked my interest in the road. History buffs will love it. The Museums, the Lewis and Clark statue, and entire waterfront restoration is well done and enjoyable. You'll be glad you did, and so were we.

Until we meet again, keep up the good work. Best wishes to all Mullanite friends, and good explorations.

Dr. Bill and Carl

May 3, 1995

Dear Deb and Kay, et al,
Here is a picture that was taken of the Mullan Road painting done by Shorty Shope, an employee of the Highway Department. This is on the wall in the entry to the state building across from the Montana Historical Society, on the angle.

I am taking the lead in having this printed on a T-shirt with "Mullan Society" name underneath it and an identifier for the Mineral County Museum. This will be a test for you to check out and see if you think it

worthwhile. The Mullan Road Marker that marks the end of the trail will also be on th shirt somewhere, as yet to be determined. I had wanted to have this to you before the meeting, that is the shirt, but the enclosed picture is not good enough quality to transfer to the shirt process. I am sorry that I will miss the meeting again this year. However, I remain most interested and would like to know of any items you all may have for members this year.

Any word from the man, Walter Gray, of Walla Walla about the marker being moved?

Hope you have a good meeting and I will try and stop in during the summer to say Hi.

Peace,
Bryan Valett

Bryan, what a wonderful idea. The picture captures the essence of travel in those days and will be an attention getter. With our logo and name also on the shirt we may just draw out someone who shares our passion. Thanks for all the works you have done for us. Especially mentioning Dr. Furdell for our program. —Kay

To Andrew Tarica—We have not forgotten or misplaced your material. Look for it to be in the Chronicles next time!!



Surviving Stretch of MR Highlighted at Sixth Mullan Day

was used to widen and level the route.

This portion of Mullan's Road has survived intact because it doesn't pass through farmland, succeeding roads were built closer to the Clark Fork River, and most of the land through which it passes is owned by either the U.S. Forest Service or the State of Montana. Efforts have been underway for a couple of years to assure preservation of this pristine route and erect some interpretive signs, but it has proved difficult to get the agencies to cooperate in consolidating ownership. It seems unlikely that any progress can be made until one agency owns the entire route.

Dr. William J. Furdell, Professor of History and Dean of Arts and Sciences at the College of Great Falls, described his research on the stretch of road between Fort Benton, the eastern terminus, and Sun River. This portion of the road is

much more difficult to locate because ranching and farming have obliterated much of it. Dr. Furdell pointed out that, although other routes west attracted more traffic, particularly after the Civil War, Mullan's Military Road was nonetheless "a significant route for immigrants into Montana."

As far as this northeast stretch of the Mullan Road is concerned, Dr. Furdell described the maps that Mullan included in his *Miner's and Traveler's Guide*—a book he wrote years after the road was completed—as "fanciful, at best."

Both these presentations gave the attending Mullanites more insight into the road itself and the role it played, and confirmed our interest in this fascinating and impressive bit of American history and engineering.

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**Cathryn Strombo and
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